

Lafayette Park / Mies van der Rohe Historic District

General Boundaries: Antietam, Orleans, East Lafayette and Rivard

Local v 2/17/2003

State

State Marker

National v 8/1/96



1333-51 Nicolet, Town Houses, 2003



Historic Overview:

Lafayette Park is significant in the Detroit history of urban renewal, labor and civil rights movements. It was built on the site of the former Black Bottom community in an effort to counter the flight of middle and upper-income families to the suburbs. The community was intended to attract residents of diverse backgrounds.

The collaborating team of real estate financier Herbert Greenwald, architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and urban planner Ludwig Hilberseimer, created a 78-acre residential community between the 1950's and mid 1960's. The new community included various residential buildings including townhouses and apartment buildings. A spacious park and a network of paths allowed pedestrians to walk to the shopping center and school without crossing a busy street. Architect Mies van der Rohe designed the residential buildings: the Pavillion, Lafayette Towers, and the townhouses. Each of the buildings featured skeletal framing, aluminum and glass skins, concrete foundations and flat roofs. It is the largest collection of his buildings on one site in the world. He believed that the form of a building must be a clear expression of its construction. The use of steel, glass and reinforced concrete were materials he thought most expressed modern technology. Another major contributor to the project was landscape architect Alfred Caldwell.

